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Collected Lyrical Poems

COLLECTED
LYRICAL POEMS

by
VIVIAN LOCKE-ELLIS

with
an introduction by
WALTER DE LA MARE

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Introduction

There is a poem in this volume—one of many that first appeared in print half my lifetime ago—that has never lost a syllable of its enchantment for me; has never ceased, like an old picture hung in some aloof and tranquil room of the memory, to invoke a reiterated fascination and delight: 'Go, nor acquaint the Rose'.

Its every cadence is as familiar as are the colours of day-break, the song of a blackbird, the looks and pattern of a flower, the face of a friend. Yet, as too with these, far from losing, it repeatedly wins a renewed freshness and bloom. Nevertheless, however often the 'experience' of reading it again occurs, I fail to follow its full implications; and am content to be repeatedly lost in pleasure over that 'acquaint', that lovely and nebulous 'household', that spectral 'knocking', the 'dread', the 'chanced', the 'noiseless' withdrawal. . . . And what *is* this Rose / Of only its moment? Of all time? *Rosa Mundi*?

Why's and wherefores concerning a poem—or of an air of music, a song, a picture,—are of minor account; not because answers to them are necessarily unattainable, but because they are implicit. This is simply how—with its echoes and overtones, its distant bell, its repeated shibboleths, and the intellectual ribbon with which the Muse ties up her hair—the language of poetry, and even such battered coppers as *acquaint*, *household*, *dread*, come to be transmuted into the gold wherewith wisdom *can* be gotten, beauty re-realised, the truth of the imagination and the revealing of the half-secret motions of the heart retrieved.

All this, of course, is a purely personal confession. It is what is often pooh-poohed as subjective. I am merely saying what this poem has been, is, and does to me; and saying this by no means either lucidly or reasonably. It is

in fact a fragment of autobiography, of a time value to its possessor, but one that must be intrinsically shared for any proof of that value. And so, in various kinds and degrees, with much else in the pages that follow.

It is judicious not to speak too ardently of a poet and of his work when 'introducing' them. Particularly if such introducing is from a sort of platform; and especially to those to whom he may be friend of an equally long standing. I might add, what in a few pages will become obvious, that these poems—the treasury of an unusual lifetime inwardly devoted to what they signify—are not in the current idiom. Every poet remains within the compass of his own mental and metrical vocabulary, rich or restricted. Some of Mr. Locke Ellis's poems might be anonymous contributions to an Elizabethan song-book. Some remind me, most welcomingly, of that rare and veracious poet, Sir Thomas Wyatt. Few are verbally obscure but many may need a close exploration and all the sensibility one may possess—the exploration of feeling. My own preference is for the shorter lyrics—which may be due to a disinclination for sustained attention or to a taste for essences.

They are, necessarily, as individual in their form as they are in their content. They refrain by habit and choice from eloquence and declamation. What their writer imaginatively and poetically is not interested in, not inspired by, not on terms of reverie with, is fairly evident. His stillness and, as one might say, his stealth, are deceptive. Listen closely and he can be strangely unexpected—with some by-way of reference, fleeting phantom of thought and idea, of emotion and fantasy. As with a starry night, a first acquaintance with a collection of poems will discover only the major constellations. Watch, and the lesser lights, the little solitaires will reveal themselves. And here there is the unusual joy bestowed on the attentive by a lovely and vigilant use of English. No

etcher can have been more blessedly intent on his finer strokes.

One might ask, in view of this poet's attitude to life—a life as much at least of the mind as of the body (which is no disparagement to his senses), and more of the spirit than of the intellect (which is certainly no denial of the intellect here)—one might ask, in days like these, and in his own words: 'And cometh none to tell in what strange land we are? And what are we?' And to answer: Turn again these pages, and see. For me, they reveal in their own degree and order what a poetic conception of our human existence implies; the poise, attitude and condition of the mind and the heart that express themselves by means of the infinitely complicated simplicities of verse. True poetry seldom more than indirectly propagates by propaganda. But it propagates. It is also a touchstone; and—whirlwind and fire not necessarily absent because they seem neither fierce nor noisy—its influence is not the less subtle, insistent and challenging for being quiet.

WALTER DE LA MARE

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Rantanagoras

Rantanagoras the Eavesdropper
Lived in Athens, none knew where,
Moved in Athens' thoroughfare—
Rantanagoras,

The divine eavesdropper, he
Wandered in the streets alone,
Known of many, seen of none,
Telling secrets to the gods.

Rantanagoras, Rantanagoras,
What and where is he ? They say,
He sleeps not by night or day,
Hearing all and knowing all.

O, where is Rantanagoras ?
There where anything is seen,
He also cometh in between
Sight and light and light and sight.

Rantanagoras, he where things
Are told, hangs on the teller's tongue.
Painful lies from it are wrung
By his eavesdropping.

He calleth, Rantanagoras,
On the silent lips to speak.
He makes no sound, but they grow weak,
And moved to utter truth.

It is the same when neighbours come,
Or senators in council meet.
Each sees, before he takes his seat,
Rantanagoras.

Rantanagoras alway,
He makes fools of curs and kings.
Each unto his secret clings
In vain, for Rantanagoras.

.

What doth Rantanagoras
With the gossip of the world ?
He chops it fine, in new phrase furled,
And sold for wisdom.

He never makes ado to sell.
None ever bought, but all is sold.
Such is the manner born with old
Rantanagoras.

Loose Rantanagoras. Let him go
From the mind's dark questioning,
Or he will take thee for the thing
Thou thinkest Rantanagoras

Ask not of Rantanagoras.
He lived, he moved in Athens once.
But since the world becomes a dunce
He is not known of it.

Yet Rantanagoras knows it still.
He wanders in the market place
Recalling each familiar face
In London, as in Athens.

Pity Rantanagoras.
Pity him and leave him there,
The hearts that beat, the eyes that stare,
Feel him and see him not.

Rantanagoras the Eavesdropper
Passes still 'twixt gods and men.
Passes darklier now than then,
Rantanagoras is alone.

Rantanagoras is unseen,
And man sees not his fellow's face
Sorrow comes to all the race,
For Rantanagoras.

Rantanagoras the phantasy
Will vanish if you look at him.
Look at thyself, thou wilt grow dim,
And vanish too.

Deny not Rantanagoras.
He loves the warmth of running veins,
And common human hearts and brains
He longs to enter still.

Deny him not with any thought
Of what he is, spirit or elf
Rather consider him thyself.
Art thou not Rantanagoras?

Rantanagoras the Eavesdropper,
How comes it, if thou art not he,
That Rantanagoras loveth thee,
Talketh of thee in heaven?

Thou art not Rantanagoras,
Or if thou art, thou knowst it not.
And he remaineth none know what.
—Alas, Rantanagoras.

If he shall e'er be seen again,
It shall be when ourselves we see,
If not ourselves, then never he,
Rantanagoras.

The Happy Islands

Let us away unto the happy islands,
O golden friend,
But we must wait until our ship be sailing,
Until the end.

When we go down into the happy islands
'Twill be for aye,
And we must leave no doubt at all behind us
When we away.

Beloved, if the skies are fair to-morrow,
An hour or so,
We will go down beside the harbour water,
And watch them go,

The little sails of the old, old seafarers,
Dark with the sea,
They that have set sail for the happy islands
Where we would be.

When sets the Sun

When sets the sun on yonder hill
His white flocks slowly follow him;
Hours have they to linger still,
Mountain-pastured, cool and dim.

When at last the folded sky
Waiting dumbly for the stars,
Lets the wool-winged phantom fly,
Lures the great owl from his bars;

Then the little grass-lamp glows,
And the blackest snails untwine;
And the cautious hedgehog goes
Under the light-uddered kine.

But the tribes of haunted night,
Omened bird and bat and toad,
They must out of sound and sight
When the Shepherd takes the road;

His white flocks are on the hill,
Hours have they to wait for him,
While the wool-winged bat is still,
And the great owl's eyelids dim.

Love of Mine

Love me nearer, love of mine ;
Earth can too much joy resign,
Too much sweetness spare too late,
Too much interest ask of fate :
Think you that for every kiss
You have put away like this
Time has half as much in store
Or Eternity the more ?

God, shall he, his kindness spurned,
Thank us for the gift returned ;
Write to-day's untasted thing
Off to-morrow's reckoning ?
Him I think the watchful Host
A clean platter pleases most ;
Him I feel the more divine
For this plenished heart of mine .

Take my heart where your heart goes,
Fill my lips with your lips' rose,
Let the cup foam to the brim
Close your eyes if they be dim,
Mix the wine, if it be good,
Not with water, but with blood ;
Give your heart, if it be true,
Give, as I have given to you.

These Are the Wreaths I Bring

These are the wreaths I bring
For my love's garlanding.
Long are the years ; the hours
Many and long, I know, since I brought flowers.

Songs, only songs are these,
Maybe they will not please ;
Little and few are they,
Perfect and proud is she ; what will she say ?

What will she say to them ?
No costly diadem
No gold nor stone, I wis,
No very precious stone, among them is.

No bloom from leafy lands
Fastened with long green bands,
Naught for its beauty given,
Or date, or rarity, or fragrance even.

Jewels she will not wear,
Gold is not gold to her ;
Flowers she loves, sometimes ;
Flowers she often loves ; but what of rhymes ?

Alas, and truth to tell,
She loves them not too well :
This much at least I know,
If she thinks well of them, she says not so.

Though they do her delight
As secret roses might,
Silent is she always,
Nor many thanks will speak, nor any praise.

For my love's heart is such
Love cannot do too much ;
For my love's heart so true
Knows that the most is the least love can do.

The Pipers

They shall be heard to-morrow ;
Their little flutes, their happy little flutes
Time shall snatch from them never ;
They that have outlived sorrow,
Their piping is forever.

Where have their feet been straying ?
The wanderers, the careless wanderers,
Pray them to linger near us.
For love of their sweet playing
They have no thought to hear us.

Where are the resting-places
Our hearts, our hurried hearts have fashioned for them
That they go past so blindly ?
Scorn is not in their faces,
Nor any look unkindly.

Of resting what need have they ?
Ours are the eyes that flinch from looking forward.
Their path is hither, thither ;
And what sign ever gave they
Of journey anywhither ?

We hear them when we tarry
When we rest too, from utter sorrow when
We hide our hearts from living,
And are too worn to parry
The weapons of misgiving.

But, when with waking cometh
The strength to rise, the strength we would not call on,
For the desire of slumber ;

The imp of silence drummeth
And doth our ears encumber.

If we pursue, the rather
They flee, those sounds, they wrap them up in darkness ;
The voices of our yearning
Fly far away, and farther
The hope of their returning.

It needs another breaking
Of camp, another and another journey ;
Land and sea marches spending
A world of overtaking,
Then haply, no sweet ending.

What if forever, gaining,
The only shore, the steep sea-silenced country
Of our hearts' heavy winging,
We find no voice remaining,
Nor custom of sweet singing ?

May then our hearts so heavy
Turn back, turn out of the storm-riven mountain,
Or shall its warders find us,
Its wild torch-bearers chevvy
Until the darkness bind us ?

And shall we never hear them,
The voices that we know to be eternal,
The sounds so true about us,
The flutes, and those that bear them,
Can they play on without us ?

Music, such music spending.
And all the sounds they make the sounds that gave us

This too sad love of being ;
This too sad, too soon ending,
Blind grasping, empty seeing ?

O eyes regardless gleaming
Above the twinkling stops of your sweet staves ;
And feet that tread the measure
And circuit of our dreaming ;
Yours is not all the treasure ;

On, on and on divinely :
Far we have wandered too and left great labours ;
The burden of your ditties
Is of a house built finely ;
And builders we of cities.

The little palms that twinkle
The smooth flute length along move not too swiftly
To cover from our gazing
The rift of many a wrinkle
And sheath of horny hazing

Children or old men are they ?
Their wide eyes are alive like those, like these
Deep-set and furrow-bearing ;
And with what rude stains mar they
Their hues of homespun wearing ?

Their cheeks with breath are swelling,
Their limbs, their ready feet are those of children ;
Their wise brows bent not, lightly
Their tale of wisdom telling,
Nor sight of it unsightly.

It must be they are older
Than wisdom need, and have childheartedness.
Strong, but a little stronger
Than death, and how much bolder,
And then to pipe the longer.

And to go on, and never
Tire of the sweet staves of their slender pipes ;
They that have outlived sorrow,
Whose piping is forever,
Whose piping is to-morrow.

A Little More

Love, yield a little more
Of your sweet kindness ;
Or bid my heart so loving you
To love a little less.

—Ah, let not your lips even,
Much less your heart say so.
Your lips denied me once ; your heart
Has never let me go.

Not far enough to save
Itself from the least pain
Not far enough to save my heart
From coming back again.

So, if my want has grown
A little, as before,
Love, you will only have to yield
A little, more and more.

Love's Gardener

Had you a garden fair,
And did men's hearts grow there,
And this one, was it to be gathered, made
To cheer some empty room
Until the sun's flowers bloom
And bright leaves in their season not to fade?

And is it your sweet will,
To play the gardener still,
And, having planted, think to do the rest,
To set bounds to the thing
That has had harbouring
An instant, but an instant, on your breast?

Is it better, as you say,
To put such thought away,
Because the past had sweetness, and the need
Of friendship, such as ours,
Green-growing, without flowers,
Or bud of them, or heavy-scented seed?

Love, have you skill to curb
The savour of the herb
That you let grow in that sweet, other name?
Or will to pluck it out,
Or heart to turn to drought
The fountain whence the living peril came?

Or shall the draught drunk first,
At daybreak, quench the thirst
Of evening, when the long day's heat is done?
And can the Gardener go
Dry-handed to and fro,
In the white furrows of the setting sun?

Well had we played the part
With nature, not with art.
Better had let the stormy tendrils stray.
Not then this vagrant scene,
These spoils of never-green,
That on their winter lonely stalks decay.

Peace, She Slumbers

Peace, she slumbers. What for rest
Shaped so sweetly as that breast ;
What so dark and dreamy-wise
As the shadow in those eyes ;
What so quiet as the air
Sleep has when it settles there ?

And what sighs can now be heard
Like a breath, a whispered word,
Whispered to the heart of pain,
Meaning love's return again.
Or like little sounds are they
From a city far away.

And what beauties newly seen,
Tumult that has never been
In the lover's heart before ;
Charm his mistress never wore,
Though the sight of it grew dim
While her wet eyes prayed to him.

Of those beauties is there one
Tongue of mine dare dwell upon ;
Of those sighings would I were
The last divine interpreter ;
Love, O love, would I were he,
And keeper of your heart might be.

After

When death has sentinelled my door
Go thou, and visit there no more ;
Go quickly thence, and nothing take
And nothing leave for memory's sake.

And when they bring me to my bier
Come not in thought or presence near,
And when they take me to my grave
Do thou that little journey save.

And when they leave me to my sleep
Do thou no piteous vigil keep.
But rather rest, that I may be
At one, dear heart, in dreams with thee.

And after, if thou think to bring
Of flowers some painless offering,
Come if thou wilt, and blossoms bear,
But leave them not to wither there.

Or if thou leave them, sweet, renew,
The gift, as the sweet seasons do ;
And if thou sorrow in this wise
Come not in sorrow's sombre dyes.

Ah, I would bid thee, if I dare,
On my sepulture spend no care ;
Yet little know I how the dead
May leave the living comforted.

So love me, love, in life as now,
And then, in death, renew the vow ;
Love's bounty spend, whate'er it is,
And, for love's sake, no more than this.

An Eastern Song

Mine is the heart of the city of sleep,
The loves of the west are unkindness to me;
Remembrance of sunlight and sadness I keep,
Of city of silence and ecstasy.

Mine are the odours of burning that heal
The cold of the night that shadows you;
The flames that feed on the dust and reel
With the spice and wine of the tainted dew.

Mine is the singing, the tongueless sound
From the still dark heart of the laden grove,
When the shadows are glazed on the lifeless ground
And the moon stands over the temple of love.

The love of the East is the love of all,
The love of many, the love of none;
The love not wanting, though death befall;
The love that ended is love begun.

The love of the West is strange to see,
The love of sorrow, the love of one.
The one remaining not with me,
What may I love, when he is gone?

For mine is the heart of the city of sleep;
The sudden darkness, the certain call.
A kiss on my lips all night I keep,
I know not whence, for the kiss is all.

And yet another Song

And yet another song must bloom to-night
In this untainted garden ; these are songs
That shall look palely in the morning light,
Having kept revel with strange fancy's throngs.
But thou shalt see them at their hour ; thy lamp
The same cool star of dewlike summer rain,
So falling, that from every petal damp
The ravished sweetness is distilled again ;
And I would have them take my thoughts to thee,
And live no longer than thyself must live,
Fade when thou fadest, be as thou must be,
Of all sweet blossoms the most fugitive ;
So breathe not often on them, lest thou give
To them alone sad immortality.

Nymph of the West

Bid me with rhymes to weave thy coronal,
Thou fairer love than the Greek shepherds had,
Or dwelt by the Sicilian waterfall,
Whom Daphnis pipes of, or some harpist lad ;
So shalt thou hear tones tremulous but glad,
The sweet awakening of those long-lost themes
That once stole swiftly through the cave of dreams
At every sunset call.

There is no piping call at sunset now,
No sudden parle and flight incontinent,
No dryad caught by the entangling bough,
And then, no sweet and night-long ravishment ;
No dawn-escapement from the herdsman's tent,
No memory left with him when sleep goes too ;
Balm for the honeyed hours, space to pursue,
And time to prove the vow.

Now all's impatience and misspent desire
The envious hope and darker than remorse,
The judgment ere the deed, the god's swift ire,
The peril thought of at the fountain's source,
The little river turned out of its course,
The desert spread beyond its former bars,
The cold moon worshipped and the barren stars
And all extinguished fire.

And yet is earth unchanged, though pale these skies,
And pale the northern minstrel who has sung
The inconstant summer through and turns his eyes
To the red hearth the hill-grown pines among
And sweetness out of bitter winter wrung ;

Though chill the vision over land and sea,
Chiller the circle of the hearth must be
Where no dream-ember lies.

Not earth, an old and milkless mother, nor
Grey heaven, a sullen sire who hoards his wealth,
These have not starved our souls and kept them poor,
That we should enter our own house by stealth
And want the stature and the boundless health,
The indomitable heart of seed that grows
Where the wind took it, and to nature owes
The debt she tends it for.

Here in the choked field, trampled o'er and o'er,
The fruit, there in the desert grows the weed,
Pungent it tastes, and bitter at the core,
But earth's own medicine is in the seed,
The wild herd mouth the leaves of it and feed,
Leaping from rock to rock; the unpasturing caves
Death's quiet sessions hold; the river laves
The low and grassy shore.

And thou, the tameless heart, undying grace
Of earth and windy wave and coloured sky,
With garments stained, and panting from the chase,
As when of old such beauty turned to fly,
Long thou hast baffled me and come not nigh
Thy lover losing heart to love, but now
The dreamed-of loveliness is mine, and thou
The fairest of thy race.

Invocation

O memory, speak with me, O kindly voice
Of the harsh years, O memory made from groans,
O harmony of time's long-labouring wheels,
Heard, heard at last when slumber steeps the brain,
Be heard at last, be heard at last again.

My kingdom cometh, sleep has scaled its throne ;
Night's sceptre droops upon the glistening seas.
Calm for a season, calm and earned repose.
Night-long in turrets whence the tides grow less.
The dawn shall come and find them furrowless.

Return, wan guardians of old dreams, refreshed
From the wild springs of northern tempests come,
Survivors of the fray, bearing no scars,
Telling no tale in mind or limb or face,
Of dark annihilation's close embrace.

Come on the dull and fiery stroke of dawn,
Meet the pale phantom of receding sleep,
When heaven is terrible and earth is strange.
Visit the homeless soul and with it find
The gathering daylight and returning mind.

Dream not of Me

Dream not of me, fair child ;
My life is like a dark and wandering wave,
And thine a freshet leaping from the rock,
Transparent, undefiled ;
Come not from thy moss'd cave
Cold-scented calm and soundless source to meet
So soon the heaving and ungoverned flood
Whose washes glut the grave.
How many forest-feet
Are planted in thy path to turn aside
Thy supple journey, and to bring thee near
Places more mild and sweet.
Be thou Meander's bride ;
So to steal where his ambling water fills
The reedy plain, and be discovered there,
And in his bosom hide.
Circle the little hills,
Water the inland flocks—for I, even I
May only cry thy name in the dark sea,
And none to hear my cry.

The Ship of Fame

Fame waits for me
Out in the offing of the unknown sea.
Her sails are furled,
And at her cable's end she holds the world.

Staunch is the ship
That in the cradle of the sky shall dip
Fire out of foam
And light from stars ; but earth is nearer home.

Dear is the place
Where the white storm drops in the goalless race ;
The harbour-bar
Where the small traders and the fishers are.

And still she rides
High-masted and aloof from sandy tides.
And still they wait,
The chartered boatmen at the harbour gate.

They wait for aye ;
And the shipmaster bides another day.
And sea-things feel
Their way along the roof of crusting keel.

And now and then
The sails of great and lonely merchantmen
'Twixt sea and sky
Hang for awhile, and pass uncertain by.

Sometime, at last,
When the black winter wind is gathering fast,

And no foot falls
On the night shore, nor voice of parting calls,

I shall make haste, .
And on the shipboat's benches, sea-ward faced,
Sit rapt and still,
And let the shipmen take me where they will.

A Dream of Babylon

I have a tent for thee in Babylon.
Was it not there I loved thee long ago ?
Dost thou remember ? Thou wert then my slave,
I bought thee in the market for much gold,
For thou wert pure and white and of the West ;
A Syrian trader sold thee, thou wert mine
Because of the great price I paid for thee,
Even the house I had in Babylon.

And then we wandered, sweet one, thou and I ;
I was a bard in Asia, thou my slave.
Dost thou recall how thou wouldst tune my strange
Rough psaltery, but true-shaped, like a heart,
And how we never wanted bread ? The lyre
Had five strings, and a song for every string,
And then a song for all five strings at once ;
I made the songs and thou didst tune the strings.
But that was long ago ; for all my dreams,
Nightly, when thou art in my arms again,
And in the cold daylight, when thou art gone,
Remembrance halts, and stumbles, and is blind.
I think there will be but a song or two
Recalled, and that great splendour of five strings
Will never sound again. I grieve for this,
For I have studied long and silently
What more might please thee, and no stir has come,
No infant music in the womb of thought
Leaping and asking to be sung. The age
Is all unrest, there is no peace for us,
The love I have for thee, thou canst not share ;
The love thou hast for me is strange to me.
Will it be so forever ? Let us seek
The old dark world again ; I know enough

To bring much back to your remembrance ;
And you, have you not been in Babylon ?
'Twas you who told me of the ruin there.
—Come, let us look together on these things,
And we may be ourselves again, perhaps
Forgive each other when we come to die.
But we must dwell again in Babylon.
Thou knowest that the wilderness is there
And ruin, and the spirit of the place
Shadowless, silent, not of the known dead,
But those that rest at last. They only rest
Whose tombs are earth again and tell no tale.
And thou, thy tomb is still in Babylon,
Nameless, but with thy sister queens, beside
The king I sold thee to. And mine a shade
Of tamarind holds, on a fast crumbling cliff
Of Ganges in the midst of India ;
A shrine, not holy now ; the stones are gone,
But once there was a little temple there.
You know the place ; one night, not long ago,
Your foot fell on my dust. The first hot moon
Of all the year had risen, a great light
On Jajmao's level sands and shrunken stream,
Eastward, you know, not far, on the same bank,
Above the steps of death, there is a shrine
Whose dome of access stands intact and holds
The painted things that fly upon the walls.
Outside, the lizard slides from lip to lip
Of the grey stone faces ; the shade is sweet,
Heavy with purple tree-blossoms ; the tree
Older perhaps than the lost dust of him
Whose sanctuary of dark and mouldering brick
Stands next the temple, further from the shore.
Such sanctuary, such temple white within,
Had I, where thy foot fell, westward of this,

That night of moonshine, thou rememberest,
For thou didst speak of it to me. I know
Thy tomb also, north-west in Babylon,
Of bricks also, but many of them are crushed
And sunk in Euphrates, and are its sand,
And many of them are mounded in the earth
Like hills ; so vast the burial of kings
In Babylon, and the long time ago,
That now only a wall or two remains
Of what was built for thee. So for himself
Built Akbar on Secundra's human plain
Barbaric brick ; hadst thou been Akbar's queen
Marble had been the palace of thy death,
And like a cloud in the sweet sunrising.
Tell me now, was it good to be a queen
In Babylon ? Didst love thy lord the king
More than thy minstrel ? I too was a lord,
A captain of the host at war, in peace
Known in the councils and the market place.
A merchant was my friend, and friend had he
Whose ships went west of Lebanon ; their freight,
Brought up on shadowy camels from the coast
Mingling with those from Ophir and Cathay,
O'erflowed the pavements and the guarded quays,
So that a steam of spices rose at night
Out of the darkness of a river pent
By palace walls. Within those walls it was,
And in a chamber opening on the gulf,
Where from their silver saucers trembling flames
Leapt up to feed upon the full night air,
I saw thee all unveiled. Within the door
Stood the smooth trader, stroking his red beard,
And one by one the lamps died of the wind ;
Through the faint perfumed shadows of the place
I came close to thee, dark, even in that dark,

My hand against thy breast ; and warm thy mouth
And sweet, even in the warmth and sweetness there.
I drew thee to the parapet and leaned
Out in the night with thee ; the waterway
Ran dark like death beneath, but all above
From ridge to ridge of our high palaces
The sky grew live with light not dawn, the stars
Uncrisping paled beside the blenching moon,
There, over Babylon. A moment more,
Another kiss—do you remember it,
The song I made, the sweet prophetic song,
Afterwards, when we wandered far below
Mesopotamia, to Beloochistan ?
I did not know I was a prophet then,
Or thou hadst seldom tuned the lyre for me
To sing and thee to hear a song so sad.

A moment more, another kiss,
And O my soul, for so much bliss,
I had leapt out with thee into the night
 Where the dead river is ;
The river flows from Babylon
Bearing a secret burden on ;
Why wander we upon the banks thereof,
 So far from Babylon ?
Death would have worked us endless good,
Love had not sunk beneath the flood ;
But that smooth trader, stroking his red beard,
 There at my elbow stood.
I lay not with my love that perfect night,
Though moon and stars paled into rayless light
And the soft waters through the harbour gates
 Went widening out of sight.
Shall not the soft reeds on Euphrates' shore
Their swaying burden clasp, and sigh no more ?

The waters found the steep ship-gates ajar,
But burden never bore ;
The river-reeds have sighed for thee and me
From Babylon down to the sandy sea ;
But that smooth trader, stroking his red beard,
Held me from death with thee.

All night I wandered in the lost moonlight
Over the wharves and past the watergates
And in the reedy sands. All white and cold
The shallows made no murmur as they let
The stark mid-current by. The little fields
Ran with straight rivulets like seams of glass
Under the haze. Yonder was Babylon,
A wall of midnight with red battlements
And pyramids of cloud ; a mountain ridge
Hollow with native fires, absorbing heaven ;
And one white star, kindling her doors of bronze
And melting her domed fastness into dreams.
—O, well thou wert a slave in Babylon
And I a captain of the treasury,
A merchant and a trader for my friends.
What though thou wert appointed for the king ?
I, only I had seen thee ; for tonight
He slept, as I should never sleep again.

I found them early in the market place ;
I had roused boatmen at the watergates
And gone under the cables of the ships
Before they dipped their smouldering braziers out ;
And when I came between the palaces
And underneath thy chamber parapet
Struck the uncertain oars out of their hands,
The scum of spice-wood, clove and cinnamon,
Silenced the cut-water, and still gave up

Sweet darkness, like a shredded shroud, not lost
In the cold sink and pallid end of night.
A silver lamp stood on the columned sill ;
The ghostly hand of dawn made the flame red,
Then the great dawn extinguished it with rose
On all the columns. The black boatmen gaped:
I smote them on the teeth and bent the prow
Into the misty groves and yellow flats
Of open wharf-water, against the mart.

No, not for gold. The king was to be pleased.
No, not for any gold. And thou wast brought
In silken secrecy of palanquin
To peer unseen upon the crowded ways ;
Nine muted slaves of Ethiopia
Thy guard, to bear thee when the sun was up
To the receiving chambers of the king.

No, not for me Yet I had power, it seemed,
Having so great a merchant for my friend.
The sun went up, the slaves were drinking wine ;
The bearded pale engravers came with clay
And stone-tables. The Syrian trader left
His trade, and with my merchant talked aside.
The sun was up, the slaves had drunk their fill ;
They bore thee to the house that was not mine,
For I had set a seal in stone for all
I had and all I was in Babylon,
And to be gone ere sundown, and with thee,
Veiled twenty leagues beyond the water gates,
Lest the king saw, or lest the people saw
Telling the king. And never to return
While the king lived and till the merchant found
Safety for me, his friend, and brake the bond
That made him what I was in Babylon.

Do you remember, dare you come with me
In dreams, as you came then in slave-raiment,
Into the high mid-chamber of the house,
Aloof, open with rose-lit steps upon
Deserted gardens in the hot noon-day ?
They were the nuptials of a slave, you know,
A slave in Babylon. On the laved edge
And overflowing shallow didst thou lie
Where the great cistern of vermilion clay
Stood on the foreheads of gigantic rams
And held the sun. There was a sound of rain
In unseen terraces, and big drops slipped
From thy pale hair and fell between thy breasts
And my dry lips like wine not only once
Poisoned with tears. Lovelike thou wert, but still
A child in Asia. When I spoke to thee
It was all of thy beauty and my dreams
Under the midnight walls of Babylon
And in the little fields on the great sands
Of lost moonlight ; and how my stealing barge
Lifted the spicy weeds in the dark slough
Beneath thy columned bedchamber at dawn,
And how the sudden sunlight flushed the wall
Under a pale green sky and quenched the lamp,
A sign to me that you were in the world.

Of these near things I spoke that afternoon.
Do you remember then what your words were ?
Your sweet hair hid you from me, and you said
'Am I the Queen ?' Was it so long ago ?
I laughed then, freely I could answer thee
My slave. Not freely can I answer now,
And show thee what thy kingdom is, my heart,
My heart, my poverty in all but thee.
Thou didst smile then, look grave, and smile again.

Is it but fancy when I fancy now
That thou wilt never be a child again,
And make a kingdom, as of old, with smiles ?
Afterwards thou didst rule in Babylon
With bitterness more than thy master brought
To his slave's eyes because of his great love.
Surely it is enough, what I have done,
And thou hast suffered, since that golden day,
Because of little things like fear, and want
Of many golden days, and not to be
Married in warm Euphrates' creeping sedge
And mingled in its reconciling sea ?

These words are cruel ; they are of the hearts
That shun each other now. My dream has fled,
While I was telling it to you I thought
You were not listening ; and I recalled
Too many of those tears and simple words,
As of a life unlived and things unknown
To you in the near gardens of the sun
When we went up to feast in Babylon.
It was not that our joy was tainted then
By such foreboding ; the few signs you made
Were those of innocence rudely enslaved.
That was in the beginning ; could you be
My slave again, I think you still would rest
Perhaps with fewer sighs and more content.
But now, recalling what the world has been,
I have made light of that early content
And funerals of those sighs , they are to me
The grace we singers have, to want again,
And want forever, that we still may sing,
Being to our strange loves only the strange
Singers of songs. The gods be trusted yet,
Want without hope could never make us sing,

And hopeless hope—if we may trust our gods,
Here is an end to harmony, and there
An end to our forever. Do you wait
The Prince of your dreams? Is he rich and bold?
Valour and wealth I sunk in Babylon
To make this song for thee, my white-armed slave,
To give to you the freedom my song gives
To give me pain. Either you shall have grace
As a Queen should, and love for love requite,
Or I will gather my lost principedom up,
Royally as I cast it all away,
And spend the last talent of open heaven
To build the walls of Babylon again,
With gateless gardens hung in flaming skies,
All for a white-armed slave.—Return with me,
I have a tent for thee in Babylon,
A tent of dreams where thy lord's palace was.
—Return with me, or I shall dream no more.

Northern Summer

Wherefore is summer fled so soon,
What purpose has he not to stay?
Till through her misty sheaves the moon
A weary reaper wends,
And her foreshortened sickle casts away
And harvest labour ends.

Now he has come and gone again,
Too mournful all in sound and sight,
The wind and the surrounding rain;
And winter-like the fall
Of dusk, the dark trees waving on the height,
The saddened woodlands' call.

A wild and homeless bird is he,
A voice in northern lands to sing,
And singing cease a voice to be;
Of its own sweetness dies
That song; 'tis but a shadow that takes wing
And after shadow flies.

The Garden of Age

The sun shines through the leaf,
And quietly here I sit,
Though the restless wind of June
Has a touch of March in it ;

But the sun shines through the leaf
And the top of the earth is brown,
And everywhere my garden
Is green where it was sown.

There is no green thing here
Of this or elder years,
That my hand has not planted,
Because of the fruit it bears ;

The fruit or the early blossom,
Month by its month renewed ;
The white heart and the golden
The young green leaf for food ;

The flowers and fruit are mingled,
Some ripe and some to be ;
The white heart wakens in the earth
The golden in the tree ;

And when, for harvesting,
Comes autumn, and has gone ;
And when on every wintry field
Lies frost and little sun ;

So old a heart, I know,
So old a heart as this,
Must ripen to the fall, and be
Where the year's harvest is.

If I Might Build Another World for Thee

If I might build another world for thee,
Beautiful, but less beautiful than thine,
Would that less beauty serve, if thou shouldst see
It held this love of mine ?

Or dost thou share my doubt, and like some queen
Seeking thy throne in fear of falling, bid
The crown be placed thy trembling hands between,
Thy heart in ermine hid ?

Ah, but the strange, the weary weight of it,
The mocking eyes that seem the courtiers,
The ghouls that in the purple shadows flit,
The murdered messengers,

The thoughts that still will come with word of me
And on the threshold of thy mind lie slain,
Those dreams of loveliness I dreamed with thee,
Not to be dreamed again.

The Wayfarer

Is this the road into Elysium ?

O sunburnt stranger, you who seem to have
Leisure to speak with whomsoe'er may come,
Do me this courtesy ;

Make answer for yourself alone, I pray,

And then, if time bestead you, and your heart
Has the wayfarer's wisdom in it, say,
Is this the road for me ?

For look you, I am older, and have gone

More than a half-day's journey towards the night,
And mine is not the joy or heart of one
Willing to turn again ;

And look you, if your gentleness would send

Me this way too, seeing how fair it is,
Consider, I have neither scrip nor friend,
Nor cleansing from my stain,

And so what like are they that keep the gate,

Are they of your mild conscience, do they serve
Their own hearts, or do prudent laws of state
Make entry hazardous ;

And do they put deep questions, such as bring

Intolerable thoughts for witnesses
To such a long and baffling questioning
As might be hard for us ?

Answer me then, and then again of this,

That I may hear you tell me to return,

With such kind counsel, as your manner is,
Such courtesies as are

A boon to those who on this journey be,
And some solace for those who take the road,
And to all doubting travellers, and to me,
Who have not trespassed far.

Spring

Since April to a bank of green
Woo'd me in summer dress half-seen,
Since in that sunlight trance I lay,
I love no more a winter day.

Thou, Spring, at thy half-open door
Hast pleased me once and plagued me more,
To lure me from the loved fireside,
And give me nowhere else to bide.

Thy sister Seasons all are fair,
And constant when the heart is there ;
But thou, who stole the heart away,
Hast not the wherewithal to pay.

I will believe, if thou art one
Of that grave household of the sun,
'Tis like a sportive maid thou art,
Playing her absent lady's part.

Nay, but I know thou art no more
Than waiting-maid at Summer's door.
'Twas Summer's self I thought to find :
—Go tell thy mistress, she's unkind.

The Revolt of Woman

As one out of a wilderness he spoke,
Pausing beneath some forest-bordering pine
Or branch-triumphant oak
Whereon the red rays of the sunset shine ;
One who has lingered all the day divine
In the miraculous company of sound,
Waiting for silence in the trembling leaves
And stillness in the ground,
That he may sleep, while the unearthly beams
His cold and watchful planet dips, and weaves
The pattern of his dreams.

II

'Yea, I am Man, the creature God applauds,
—If creature I, and if creator He ;
Art thou not well appraised, and who defrauds
Thee of thy Right, who counts thee One with Me,
Whose equal thou canst surely spare to be ?
—Come, let us sleep to-night,
And thou shalt help the starshine, as of old,
With thine eyes' searching light,
Lie not so far away, the dews are cold,
And prowling feet are near, from whose red clutch
If I deliver thee, great things are told
And brave songs fashioned, such
As pleased Apollo, when he bought the lyre,
Visiting Earth again,
And sending the unconquerable fire
Of music through the brain ;
And for love's token, and to prove thee mine,
Touching the heart most where it touches thine.'

III

As if some song-bird, stopping on the wing,
From tree to distant tree did cease to sing,
 He ceased ; enchanted stood
The pale Enchantress, would-be following
That note of music through the deepening files
 Of vale-descending wood ;
But when the thin mist rose and coldly burned
In the last glances of expiring day,
Either he never went, or had returned ;
 And on his lips scant smiles.
With something of soft scorn, as who should say
A love so proffered were resistible ;
 Or why does she delay,
Since God and Nature loveth him so well ?
 —Her lips are opened now,
And in her heart she gropes, and in her mind to tell
Why she will not unto her lover bow

IV

‘While you were making songs for me to sing
(Was it my voice you loved, or the sooth words
Which your high muses taught you in the field ?)
 I burned with childbearing,
 I watched no flight of birds,
The dripping black rock-rafters were my shield,
My place where darkness and where silence was.
 How often did you come,
Except to bring me victuals, or because
The woods were wet, the cloudy heavens dumb,
 And your companions fled ?
And when the pain was more, for in my arms
 The fruit of it was dead,
What could you do but build a grave for it,
 And utter common charms,

And round my aching breasts your girdle knit,
And bid me battle with my own alarms,
 And with my sorrow sit,
Till sorrow I became, and gladness yours
 To part with me, and know
The freedom of your limbs, and journeying
With the moon-warrior's chariot to and fro,
 And joy the huntsmen bring,
When the woods crack and forded rivers flow ;
 And hope the dawn outpours,
When the white ships into the orient go,
And the sun laughs from earth's receding shores ?

V

Pity me if you will
But I have missed you long, and can endure
 Without your pity still.
These breasts are drier and these tears are fewer
 Than those you comforted ;
And that grace in your sight of uncomplaint,
 That too almost is dead ;
These words you hear, they have the sexless taint,
And their unloveliness is good to you,
Like the unloveliness of blasted things,
Of deserts, and the salt and spumeless sea,
And the volcanic dust that creeps and clings
About an island in the Midland blue ,
 And you will watch my flight,
And make your cloud-winged horses touch the ground
 To have me still in view ;
Your eyes are curious, and you will propound
The mystery of the wings that cross your sight
And drop far short of their pretended goal ;
The thing that flaunts in your peculiar heaven,
 Frail claimant of a soul :

Usurper of the tyranny of song,
 Daring to voice its wrong,
With cries to which no ancient charm is given
Like antidotes rubbed in the fangs of war ;
That which made light to you the fate that hurled
 The plague-bolts of the far,
The homeless, irrecoverable world ;
 And your quick mind at last,
Alone with its companionable star,
Testing the burden of the low world, cast
 The tinselled husk aside ;
And surer of eternity than we
Of hope to see the embers blaze again
Who on our dull forsaken hearths abide,
You leap upon the grave, woo death, and free
 Your spirit of the chain
And poisoned rust of this mortality.'

VI

She ceased ; he had withdrawn, as silence might,
Into the deeper stillness of the wood,
Mingled irrevocably with the night ;
 But now another stood
Against her who had thought to be alone ;
A woman, fair as she and younger-eyed,
 Who also loved him.
And she the lightest mountain-fleece had on
Her slender loins bound, bare else of limb,
 Of bosom and of side.
—'What, child, away from camp at set of sun ?'
 '—He gave me this,' she cried,
And shook above her head a little spear
That might have held the tree-cat on the run,
Or marked, but not to fall, the fallow deer.

VII

' 'Tis thus, poor child, and thus he plays with you ;
I was his wife.' — 'And now,' the maiden said,

'Are you his wife no more ?'

— Come, let us gather faggots for a bed,
And faggots for a wall and for a door,

As his strong hands would do ;

And when he comes at a more weary hour
Of night, remembering the homeward way,

I will mount guard instead,

That he may sleep with you and in your power
Lie, at the least, till day.'

— 'Child,' said the elder, 'will you be of those
Who follow to the end,

And would have others follow, no one knows
What weariness of pain ?

The rather take experience for a friend,
Who, crying halt at half the journey, goes
Back into camp again.'

VIII

With long, uncertain gaze
Out of the frontiers of the wood she turned
And sought the open field where the small rays
Of distant guardfires burned ;

And spoke to the low stars words of self-praise
Which they dwelt mildly on.

— 'Further,' she said: 'have we not hearts as well
To want the world as to give babes the breast,
And stifle discontent when they are gone ?

Shall none among us tell

Whether by action fate be conquerable,

Whether there be noon-rest,
And with the spent daylight, oblivion ?'

— Thus having said (and those low stars saw best

Her eyes, for what they yearned, and if to blame)
—Thus having said, no voice replied to her,
Nor anyone went with her through the night,
Nor any out of camp to meet her came,
Nor asked if she were there ;
Only the fields were lit with fainter flame,
The wolf stalked nearer and the flock took fright ;
The hardy sheep-boy slept ;
And the pale wanderer, paler at the sight
Of bleating sacrifice and scattered fold,
Sank in her path and on the bare earth wept,
And slumbered when the night was grey and old.

Nocturne

Ye sentries of the amber moon,
Slow-swaying trees that still my spirit keep
In this wide trance ; as surely and as soon
As ye shall yield your captive up
To stony guards of sleep ;
As surely, utterly
As your dark ranks shall fall
And your Enchantress all
Enchantment end and only sleep remain ;
So, even so would I
Have slumber touch my song, that should not wake,
No, nor be sung again ;
Such loveliness it is
My heart reflects, troubled for my song's sake,
Lest it fall short of this.
Thou secret and dread power
Of earth's perfection, let but my song share
This beauty of an hour,
And with it pass time's gates and with it fare
Into the unlimn'd vast.
Now is the eddying air
And watery moon o'er cast.

In the Greenwood

Love, if love should call to thee
In the greenwood, as a bird
Calls his mate, thou canst not flee
But must needs a captive be
To fear and wonder.

Heart, if heart mean nothing where
Sways the music in the bough,
Heart, if heart be wanting there,
All is wanting, nothing fair
In heaven or under.

Take no token, hear no vow
That in city walls be made,
Words forever false as now,
Words that are no witness how
The heart be lying.

But if love should call to thee
In the greenwood, as a bird
Calls his mate, thou canst not flee
But must needs a captive be
To love undying.

England

In northern nature where the Stream
Atlantic flows and far •
Earth's Celtic shores resound beneath
Orion's droning star,
The cloudy havens and sweet-famed
Isles of the English are.

Let not vain boast with other hands
Or peoples these compare.
Now and again men praise themselves
Whom men esteem not fair ;
This land and that is paradise
When hell is here and there.

But, England, all is writ of thee
In character of flame ;
And of heroic time a tale
Is told when told thy name
They found thee cradled at the springs
And blowing reeds of fame.

Nations like men are secret starr'd
At birth for small or great.
One takes the glance of God and sets
The field of human fate ;
But winneth not by arms to have
And spend the world's estate.

Thy glory not a conqueror's name,
But works of wondering men.
Thou couldst have spared thy fabled saint
And heavenly poet's pen ;
Time's millions held in fee, but not
Thyself, not England then.

They squandered life, thy children, yet
Who cared for life as they ?
To build in earth the house of dreams
They fired the barbarous clay,
And named for praise the creature gods
And hymned the mortal day.

Should such a brood have kept thy hearth
In ocean's restless sight ?
Thine empire is a haggard's dream
Dreamed of a winter night
Of howling wind and seaward wind
And sailless morning light.

What know they not of fateful deeds
Thy scornful lips heard tell ;
And proud thy heart and cold thy heart
And dark thy heart as well,
Who sent to silence Siva's feud
And that rude vaunt of hell.

But not of this, but not of this ;
God's rest to them who filled
The breach of human faith with works
Of blood and dear life spilled ;
God send them sleep at last and that
Blaspheming trumpet stilled.

Yet at the tale of all thy strength
Upon the narrow seas,
My heart leaps to be named with thee
And of thy witnesses ;
Though they be vain who give thee praise,
And I the last of these.

The Sleeper

Thy harp most musical
Singer of earth's delight,
Hangs it in silence all
The heavy night ?

From earth, from wandering
The weeping fields, I come,
Where thou art slumbering
In thy high home.

Till the blue shadow hath
A whiter trail to keep,
No turning in the path
Of thy deep sleep.

Nay, I will pass to thee
Word of the early night,
That thou, the Sleeper, see
What holds my sight.

'Tis cloudy earth and air,
Scant moon and smouldering bog ;
The wild duck speaketh there,
The fisher frog.

None ever spake but these,
Was nothing but is now.
Were never witnesses
But I. Wake thou,

Sleeper ! At such an hour
Comes shape to what has lain
An age in death, and power
To live again.

But not to thee it comes,
And I no vigil keep,
Who hear the muted drums
And tread of sleep.

As cloudy regiments,
Rebels of heaven, pass,
Pitching their soiled tents
In fields of glass ;

So surgent sleep confounds
This victor over time.
His shadows from the bounds
Of nature climb,

And mingle in the rout
Of life, whose sentinels
Like troubled ghosts go out,
Undoing spells.

One, gliding, seems to stand ;
Silver the wand he bears.
One snaps the silver wand,
And so night fares.

One turns a glimmering wheel ;
So wanders thought away ;
The solemn senses reel
Dumb thralls are they ;

No word to signal thee,
Seeker in sullen shade ;
And now no word from me,
In thy like laid.

Nay, I remember not
The word, but with thee keep
A silent mansion. What
Is left is sleep. .

In Sicily

Sicilia, to have known thee in thy youth,
When to thy shores the ships of Chalcis came,
Not many days' soft sail from Attica,
A fairer seaboard of the same fair sea.
Then rose New Naxos by the friendly sea,
The beached ships and the home-sending tide ;
For who should know Enceladus his wrath,
His stormy prison-bars when he should break ?
The brown Sicanian wondered and withdrew
To his dark eyries on the giant's tomb.

Who shall take up the burden of thy song,
The heavy burden, now thou art discrowned
And in this garb of poverty and age ?
Could not thy squalid and poor listless tribes
Leave thee that dearest portion of thyself,
Thy forests and thy nightingales ? Not one
White wing of gull on all this lovely coast ;
Nay, they have ground the very rocks for bread,
Turned Alpheus' sands, and of his fountain made
A waste, of Arethusa's wells a waste.

Not now to Greece, not now across that sea,
The fairest, O the fairest of the world,
Are turned the eyes of my desire. Instead
Let old Imagination keep his house
And through the windows of untravelled dreams
Look down the summer slope of fame, the shore
Of tideless waters ; Argo fleets afar
Becalmed unto eternity ; the end
Of human Hope where the beginning was,
Her palace builded and forsaken there.

Like Starveling Spring

Like starveling spring in aged winter's lap,
My heart's a moment cold, but no worse hap ;
That imp in summer's face shall fling his cap.

The Raven doth a croaking voice prefer,
But hear afield his sister Crow bestir ;
Heaven's arch was vaulted high to echo her.

And such sky-sounding plaint have I of Death
Who hath some small spite on my late-drawn breath,
And dear love not long joined dissevereth.

How soon, O heavenly world, shall I have made
So far a journey through thy charmed glade
As to endure to see its colours fade ?

I am not that bird swift to change of scene
And change of mate the song-seasons between ;
For me the bare briar follows on the green.

A cold heart singing still shall one become,
And one warm heart turn cold when that grows numb ;
Two hearts silent when one of them is dumb.

But brood not on that silence, O too sweet
Friend of the Summer, when the branches meet
Betwixt the dim lawns and our flying feet.

Now like the Robin, to be like thy friend,
I'll sing from summer's front to winter's end,
That raven-note to extinguish or to mend ;

For that old Fowler, Death, stands in his sleeves
The best of many a summer day and leaves
His winter work to winter dawns and eves.

The Cuckoo

Come early, Cuckoo, patient bird,
And on thy three-stringed viol strum ;
Come early, Cuckoo ; thou art heard,
And no man doubts that spring hath come ;
Tune thy two strings and break the third.

Come seldom, Cuckoo, welcome guest
Who wear'st thy welcome out too soon ;
Usurper of the small bird's nest,
Thou art well paid for thy one tune.
Now get thee gone, thou weariest.

The Greenhorn

When all the day 'tis rain and rain
Till sunset makes a watery stain ;
When all the night 'tis blow and blow
Till morning comes unmasking woe ;
The townsman then updraws the blind
And finds such dolour to his mind ;
Once more reproves the rainy fates
And looks contented on his neighbours' slates.

The greenhorn in his ivied doors,
When he has mopped the earthy floors
And made the dampish stick to burn
Looks at the weather in his turn ;
The greenhorn looks from sky to earth
And sees his own and neighbour's dearth ;
—But our estates are rich in rain,
He says ; and now the wet winds blow again.

The Traveller of Styx

To one upon the Stygian Shore arrived
From Earth's pale quarter of the murky zone,
Sole freight of Charon's crew, their sleepy toil
Discharged at ease and landed in the dark
Transpontine meadow; unto him the bland
Ambassador of God in waiting; 'Hail,
Stranger and Traveller of the nightly ford;
To me thy now appointed guide make known
Whither thy journey in this traveller's land,
And thy desire takes thee.' The willing Ghost
Responded: 'How long time ago in Earth
The gates of all desire were closed on me;
And thou hast on the moment asked me this,
And but a moment given me for reply.
Yet as thy heavenly livery suggests
Heavenly intelligence to dwell with thee,
Advise me to my choice.' 'That', said the Grave
Angel, 'I may not do. But this from me
Know, if thou wilt. Two paths lead hence, the one
A steep but short ascent to heaven's place
And round of guarded thrones. The other way,
—What matter whither?—for beginning takes
The watery hither shore. I know it not.
'Tis endless, and of them that at this turn
And parting of the ways, have chosen it,
None have I seen return. Choose now.' He said,
And turned his gleaming vans towards the Hill.
'Hold,' quoth the Traveller of Styx, 'I go
Not with you, but the other way. I keep
The river-course and cast out to the plain,
And when and how I find it. If there be
No other guide, adieu.' 'Thou needest none,'
The Angel said and deep obeisance made.

'Why dost thou reverence me?' the Childlike Shade
Returned; to whom the Applauding Messenger:
'O, of the Company of Life-in-Death
Thou art; none other ever takes that way.'
'I hear, and wait if to hear more,' replied
The halting Ghost. 'More can I tell thee not,'
The answering Herald. 'For as much as this,
I thank thee, Angel,' said the Traveller,
'And for that saying.' Then the ruthful Guide:
'Would I might go with thee to be thy faith's
Guardian and in the cloudy gulf at times
Report the signals of a happier shore;
But thou art even now upon the brink,
And these the waters of forgetfulness
Will rise upon thy heart. Not unto thee
Nor yet in heaven is known thy fate; But He,
The Spirit, Himself that keepeth not heaven's bounds,
Knoweth if hope there be or light upon
The journey ending not in heaven. For aye,
Farewell.' And with like courtesy the Ghost:
'Farewell.' The Angel gazing from the Hill
Down the grey waste and interval of worlds,
Saw him descend, the steadfast Wraith of man.

At Common Dawn

At common dawn there is a voice of bird
So sweet, 'tis kin to pain ;
For love of earthly life it needs be heard,
And lets not sleep again.

This bird I did one time at midnight hear
In wet November wood,
Say to himself his lyric faint and clear
As one at daybreak should.

He ceased ; the covert breathed no other sound,
Nor moody answer made ;
But all the world at beauty's worship found,
Was waking in the glade.

Age

O thou grey World, mischief hath taken thee
To pawn thy quiet and so dote on youth,
That fair will nevermore thy mistress be,
So the star sages tell thee, saying sooth.
Bring down again and from the dust redeem
The precious-paged record of warlike years ;
Love's memory is richer than his dream,
The drops of age costlier than childhood's tears,
Now are the leaves of spring a reddened flame
And drift of gold about the smoking share ;
And thou thine autumn lodge in fields of fame
Abiding art an idle keeper there ;
As aged Adam whom his staff did bear,
And unto Eden's gates at sunset came.

Death

Shadow, of life the cloudy element,
The dark companion instant to assuage
That drouthy canker, memory, and prevent
Too deep decay, the soul's desert of age ;
Who struck thy sign from heaven and named thee Death ?
Not He, the planter of the cosmic field,
The maker of the rain that watereth
Good tilth and foul, furrow and weedy yield ;
He saw thy dawn in heaven and dewlike fall
From roof of nature's womb with Life, thy twin,
When thee thy lustier birth-mate did forestall
Held by the heel, so nevermore to win
Thy birthright, but a stranger stand at all
The doors of life and enter hardly in.

There is a World

There is a world beyond the world of dreams,
A beauty not of those imagined skies ;
O thou, earth's child, whose phantom-lighted eyes
Have watched the sunken starlight's tenuous beams,
Hope plunged in midnight's strait and pitchy streams
At glassy ebb: O thou sleep-wanderer, rise,
Along the river's dangerous margin lies
The way thou camest to these cold extremes.
—So be thou saved returning, to survive
The watery perils of that forlorn shore,
If in thy camp-fire some small flicker live
To guide thee home, thou wilt not wander more ;
Life has no fairer world than this to give,
And heaven is thine whose quest of it is o'er.

Eyes can no Falsehood Tell

Eyes can no falsehood tell,
'Tis only lips forswear,
None in thy sight could dwell
And faith not there.

I would thine eyes were mine,
Then thou their truth should see ;
And have that perfect sign
Of love from me.

But wanting thine eyes' flame,
Though my heart burn as true,
I must use words, the same
As false ones do ;

I must for thy dear sake
Tune those old strings again,
That now had better break
Than speak in vain.

In Beauty's Praise

I had not loved thee hadst thou not been fair ;
And if I loved thee not the world would cease.
Tell me, what winter tree would blossom bear,
What cloud the showery pearl for pattern take,
What hill its azure-laden winds release,
If not for beauty's sake ?

So if I love thee for this cause alone,
Think not that there is wanting in my love
Some gift which had enriched some other one,
Praised not, 'tis coldly said, on beauty's score ;
Think not that I have further faith to prove,
Sweet, or could love thee more.

Dream-Merchandise

If in the traffic of my dreams
I might a wayside pedlar be,
Or traveller beside slow streams,
Or trader of the sea ;

If I might till my garden-rood
Contented with perfection there,
I should have careless livelihood,
To spend and not to spare.

But interest in man's large estate,
His forfeit in the bonds of time,
The matter of his mortal fate
Is matter of my rhyme.

So urges Death his dateless claim,
So comes the scrip of Age o'erdue ;
And in the empty mart of fame
My song is bankrupt too.

Merchant of Dreams, compare with mine
Thy tale of traffic not in gold ;
What though our credit show decline,
And bills of lading old ;

Be dreams our venture still ; our quest
The country of the prophet's ken ;
The unbuilt city, the unrest
Divine of mortal men.

The House of Truth

Almost, Beloved, would I leave thee thus
And take my journey from thee for awhile,
To move in farthest regions nebulous,
Haply with Fable on her cloudy isle.
There should I seek this sun that shines on us ;
His austere rising long delayed.

Ah then, if then the path led not to thee,
And from that wild I might not come again !
The dark rock, the unnavigable sea,
And o'er the gorge the blue stars wheeled in vain.
Dawn's passing there in eyeless effigy ;
And robed in cloud her pallid feet.

Nay, I go not and but in dreams go nigh
The old wells of the desert-singers, drink
Their prophets' potion, not to prophesy ;
But like a ghost along the watery brink
I wander, till grey wings from Atlas fly ;
His shadow on the western cloud.

When Sets the Sun

When sets the sun upon thy toil at last,
O man, stale-living in the midst of change,
Shall not the long time past,
The distance of eternity from time,
In some part hallow this terrestrial range
With light of far sublime,
The traveller's backward look on sunset hills
Already seeming strange.
Long gazes he, until the tide of night
His shore of vision fills,
And sleep, the strand of glimmering aftersight.
—Grant it to come to me also to keep
This small session in camp at end of day,
To have this waking witness ere I sleep
Of the world passed away ;
Whether dreams take me then, or heralds wait,
As singing children say ;
Or ushers of the stars, bewildering fate,
Upon the walls of darkness ; or not less
To be desired than they,
Calmer forgetfulness.

The Venturers

An hour to windy dawn,
And there's no sound in the sea-flowing harbour
But splash of keel wave-borne
And wash of wave along the hulks at anchor.

Some vessel gaunt and spare ;
What is that shadow in the outer harbour
Was not at sunset there,
Nor in the roads, nor on the white horizon ?

No one hath seen her come,
Or heard her dropping sail or speaking pilot ;
Or noise of muffled drum,
Her grapnel loaded on the midnight water.

What rig hath she so strange,
Like none in homeward port or distant sailing ;
Except the fancy range
To sculptured sails and hulls of old adventure ?

It is such ship as seems
To shape the running wrack of broiling tempest ;
It is the play of dreams,
The trick of darkness and a phantom surely.

—But hither, who are ye,
Come down the hills of night, in number seeming
A fair ship's company,
The manning of some fair ship, some sea-going ?

O strange and silent-wise,
A slow wind from the hills is coming with you ;
The cold shaft swifter flies,
Light not yet dawn upon the nearer waters.

O dark ship's company,
How are your faces as one man's among you,
And unseen eyes that see
One quest, and of each other take no counsel?

O stout hearts and in time
For farther sail than ever yet was farthest,
Or told in prose or rhyme
Of empty seaways, islands foam-surrounded.

Far is your voyage now,
If through the world's straits to uncharted ocean
Ye turn the labouring prow,
No compass telling or known star for guiding.

With higher hearts than yours
Your fathers stood not for the southern islands
Beyond the old Azores,
And Fabled Continent, fortunate sailors.

Midway the world they came,
Past nature's sleeping hordes and unregarding
Sentries of flood and flame;
And through the singing straits, fetching sweet haven.

And they that won the earth
Aforetime, leaving it to you, their children,
Its gifts of dearest worth,
Its sweetest springs by far they tasted, winning.

And have they left to you
The secret of a world still to discover?
O happy, fearless few,
Continuous ocean-bound divine explorers.

Ye will not wait till dawn,
Ye will not hear farewell nor have leavetaking.
For you the lot is drawn,
The tide goes out and the dark hour of sailing.

Go, Nor Acquaint the Rose

Go, nor acquaint the Rose,
Nor Beauty's household with that grief of thine.
Stand not in wait with those
Who with their knocking trouble the divine.

But thou, let Beauty be ;
Dread distance of her chancèd slumber keep ;
If then she follow thee
When thou art treading noiseless from her sleep,

Rose then and wafted Rose,
Like summer past and summer's breath still there,
Shall pay thee all she owes,
More than she ever yielded to thy prayer.

Epode

Dark days of Spring,
March blustering ;
April with rainy fall
Pale gleaming, if at all ;
A heavy waste it is
Of month-old promises.
But well, such weather ;
Sit at fire together ;
Happen wind and rain
Well for us twain,
And walls built stout
To keep no worse fate out.

Now leave casement swinging
For that bird's singing.
He has a glimpse beyond
Pine-cave and dripping frond ;
He is on business drawn
To hop upon the lawn ;
Robin, what country-dunce
Nameth him not at once ;
But talking of these birds
Is never-end of words ;
Pull-purse and never-ending
Is thriftless spending ;
Here's one whose store of verse
Lies in no shallow purse,
Let him the talking do
This dark day through ;
A pretty task he'll have
To pitch a sweeter stave
To-morrow's sunny weather,
Dry wing and leaping feather,

Cloud blown away,
And like mid-May.

Ah, now you murmur, Pray,
Like what mid-May ?
Bird-prophets are a snare,
In winter-days they were,
When old December's tune
Was like an air of June.
Granted this doubt of yours ;
To-morrow, say it pours ;
My Bird-muse, granted he
Conjures with melody ;
I have a parable
Shall conjure nigh as well.
Take then his song and mine
Remembered line by line,
And little shall we teach
But what the heart may reach,
No matter bring to birth
But what doth live on earth,
Doth live and never die
Though we have passed it by.
—Heaven-born ! my country-song
Let sing, 'tis not for long ;
Soon unto other mood,
Perhaps to solitude
Of my companion dear,
I shall have passed from here.
But now the parable,
—And see she harken well.

Know then, between us, these
Are woodland mysteries ;
And thus a woodland year

Turns like a crystal sphere,
That all ways looked upon
Has some reflex of sun.
This, if you doubt, go look,
Deep in neighbouring forest nook,
Late winnowing-ground
Of autumn, winter's spongy mound
Of oaken leafage pale and dark decayed.
There see inlaid
With mould of light and lichen's yellow rays,
The spiry maze,
Field the lavish painter Sun
Has left his brush upon.
Indeed, if it befell
Mortal to do his task so well,
The Builder's name,
Seeing it were written on his house of fame,
Easily should that man spare
The tale of idle days to linger there.
For to have wrought
So close to the world's thought,
Is ended labour of mortality,
The Master's burden ; he
No further way of life discovereth
Saving in death.
What, then ; is that a mournful way
Sun goeth to his rest of cloudy day ?
—Earth is not moved for him,
Nor eyes of that bright service dim
When vestal months pursue
The altar-circle and bright order due
To lunar old decrees.
Birds then, the chief of auguries,
Float o'er the temple-court of earth,
Appearances of timely birth

In pale region and sunless steep of air ;
Birds, on the passage there
Of sempiternal rites
And rumour earliest breathing in those heights,
Follow like cloudlets of Jove's throne
The Queen of Heaven, gone
To annual streams of her virginity ;
The fable told in Argos. She,
Consort of not too happy fate,
The Olympian-called, earthly-compassionate
Mother of Marriage, June,
Cometh like old Atlantis, bearing boon
To stormy ports of northward sail,
Time when dark Gael
And English islander
Hear in their droning fanes no word of her.

But she has heralds all moist ways between
Cloudy woodside green,
Drear holt and hamlet unawakening ;
Birds of sunless daylight sing,
And know not of their task from morn to eve
The labourer's sorrowful reprieve.
These are the same
Who on occasion of more fame,
Long-tuning echoes find
In the judicious mortal mind ;
When all those tattercoats of minstrel throng
Repair into the highway of their song,
The new-made-happy horde,
A spring-day's journey from their winter board,
With confidence rehearse
Some new-discovered purpose theirs
Joy to relate,
And the divine cheer of their human fate.

When as at height of day,
Upland skylark making way,
To that concave azure suiting
His runnel pipe, sets shepherds fluting.
Or blest of wakeful men,
The drenched nocturnal pilgrim, when
In her moon-dusk veil
The starry nightingale,
Priestess of adoring grove,
Leads in sightless tracks of love
The new-found worshipper.
Then not a leaf doth stir
But pulse of song.

This dark day long,
Birds of the sunless times,
These are faint rhymes,
And one by one in hearing wrought
Of leafy chambers of your thought
And towers musical,
Whence letting fall
Many a sweet sound's burden,
These, made for praise or guerdon,
These ye informed have
With substance rich and grave
Of melodies, less sweet than your notes are,
But scattered far
Like yours, in all world's weather.

—Come, Heart, together
This heavy day, let us make cheer,
Seeing the end is near,
And we shall say,
Give, give us back our heavy day.
Whether we turn to spell an olden tale,

Or set dark sail
And enter sparkling gates, with memory,
Or hope, to skim the enamoured sea ;
Carriers of silver ocean,
In a vastness wanting motion,
Our birdlike convoys drop away ;
Skies of dissolving day,
Great space and sundown signal re-illuming, bear
Blazon of the immortal way we fare.

'Tis not the Multitude

'Tis not the multitude
Of valour, which, when war
Rose like a moon of blood
Above the golden bar
Of England's harvest hills,
Poured out, a slow calamity,
Across the subdued sea,
A blast for swollen ills,
A scourge for warlike pride,
An untried arm against prepared wrath.
And still to the sheer side
Of doom they clung through long duress;
Hewing a reckless path
To an unseen summit and a visionless,
The peace for which they died.
It is not this that lights
The dull pall of my dream,
Upturning through the night's
Squalor, a happy gleam,
An exultation swift
Growing as dawn in other lands,
At wave of eastern wands.
It is a voice like the down-drifts
Of a fair early morning rain
Sown by delicious hands
On leaves and hidden grass;
Our England's virtue, new-discovered
By those who through her greening chantry pass;
Her voice again,
The lyric of her dead.

1917

There is a Vale

There is a vale descends with woods arch'd over
Upon a glassy and a noiseless tide,
Whereon through moss-lined shadow and green cover
Peers one who would her naked beauty hide
From a sea-gotten lover looking for his bride.

The woods, whose feet the listening salt river
Creeps in through paths diurnal to embrace,
Make of earth's native forms, whose fresh robes shiver
At the light's touch, a faery and strange place,
Lure and affright forever the swimmer's upturned face.

'I know thy beauty—more if I did know,
O Love', he cries 'were drowning death for me.
Only that I have kept my shore-made vow
—Daily I rise and daily fall from thee—
The constant witness thou, till time and tide set free.'

His voice I heard. Then silence. Priests of Even
Walked up the skies with silver keys of Night.
I saw the demon moon take of keys seven
The least, that locked the waters in their bight.
The rest, that open heaven, she hid from mortal sight.

The Winds of Carne

Soft are the winds of Carne that fill the elms
On Lannarth height with sound of waveless seas,
Manaccan a near voice, till Silence whelms
The silver fields, the hill of mysteries,
Her birthplace, of her realms the first and fairest these.

O Voice, in my hushed sense so mused on, so
Remembered—even as the rose-petal there
In thy dark-alleyed path—when shall I know
Thy place again? Till the last shadows wear
My day of life to no darkness, if thee I hear,

One of tumultuous voices from the lawn
Of miraged harvest : Gold in heaven appears
The sign of Ceres, virgin marriage, dawn
Chilling the seas. From the unchilded years
There is a light withdrawn, or seen only through tears.

But not for Beauty's requiem dimmed these eyes,
Looking for news of earth,—might Love's last word
Plead like his earliest-spoken symphonies.
—Fair land! How near unburthening I heard
This branch of paradise and nest of singing bird.

—How fares the moon of Carne, to-night, that fills
His glade with stars, his valley with sea-streams,
With ghostly reapers all his harvest hills?
—The tide is out, and on the shore meseems
A stumbling Reaper spills the harvest of his dreams.

Sea-Country

The thistled dunes have lulled the shore,
And with the thistles corn-stalks grow.
Now brims that ocean murmur o'er
Into a music none may know,

Till Eden for her peace drew near
These storm-ports of the watery globe.
Soft breathe the salt sown pines, and here
The snake stems wear a whispering robe.

These coverts, paved with rushy green,
Were planted for the turtle's bower,
And faintly hums the breeze between
Crab-orchard and sea-pasturing flower.

Here in his twisted harbour-pale,
The marshbird warbles, as the sea
Had lent unto his voice a sail,
And wavedrops for fresh melody.

'Tis the lark's race ; did he not win
The rippling steps of music's throne,
How clear the dancing wave within
Were heard, how many a voice less known.

How many a voice, ere this one slake
His thirst with cup that music yields,
And on the mortal silence break,
And not these fields.

The Suffolk Shore

Where the lean tamarisk and grey thistle have
Their pauper footing on the Suffolk dune,
I walked a day, my soul to save,
Apart from men, and made this tune.

—Out on the seaway, ships of Thames and Tyne,
Move with the hours and keep the eastern pale.
They make to-morrow haven, line
On line returning, smoke and sail.

So, by your watery gods, dark fleet, I said,
I trust my keel on no more distant main.
Never from this horizon fade
My hopes, but here must pass again.

Thanks to your watery gods, I said, who filled
The deeps and shallows of this landbound sea,
And in its mournful circuit willed
The limits of our world should be.

Our rivers, black with commerce, these we know,
And lamplit roads of all our wave-built quays,
Where through the dripping gates we go,
And piled-up murk of estuaries.

—But less of that great flood we voyage on,
Strait, O my captains, of no inland sea,
Whither we cast, and sometime run,
Longshoremen of eternity.

To Idleness

To idleness the day is owing,
Said the sun-sleeper, pastor of his dreams.
Over far hills my flocks are flowing,
And by untroubled streams.

I see them, if the noon spill splendour
Through the half-lifted posterns of my sleep.
I see them not, no tale I render,
No shepherd of my sheep.

But when dark dews have dyed the vesture
Of spent repose, and on my brimming sight
Float wefts of stars from looms of nature,
Fair industry of night,

Fast now and faster flies the spindle ;
Amain I drive and shut the huddled pale,
And count the fleecy hill and kindle
The torch and tell the tale.

The Missel

The Missel pipeth earliest of the day,
While dawn doth yet her noiseless province keep.
And the most silent fingers of the stars
Are pointing still in sleep.
His meditated bars
He tuneth, and again doth softly play.

Again he resteth, and no other sound ;
Unless the enchanted sleeper turn his head,
As at a face seen through unstarted tears,
And living that was dead.
—The dead a thousand years
Are living in that silence most profound.

In mid-creation, first of hymnal dawn,
Alone, without the beat of waiting quires,
A voice is heard ; such music never was ;
And not a breath suspires
Nor in its troubled pause
Are sighs of seraphs or of angels drawn.

Thy triumph hidden, O Nature Divine !
Hidden from white eternity thy pain.
In place of new-born Heaven, thy motherhood
Found Earth beside thee lain.
Thou with celestial food
Didst touch those lips, Then looked those eyes in thine.

Infant of Dawn, Mortality !—Once more
In the grey field and emptying camp of stars,
Bemused within dark orisons of love,
Past quiet wrecks of wars,
The old chant of thy grove
Ripples and breaks upon a daylight shore.

Good Friday

My thoughts, my best companions still,
When poesy and art are fled,
Stray with me by the common rill,
The living fountain, and the dead.

And my desires, scattered of old,
Trampled in dust and flame and mist,
Under the word of God, unrolled
From your dark pulpit, brother-priest,

Now with the winds ingermineate,
And flung fast on the mountain face,
Are this one flower, this human fate,
This dying dream, this ancient grace.

Whether Come Tears or Laughter

Whether come tears or laughter,
Promise of life renewed, or muttered doom,
The tongue of midnight heard, and silence after,
Or the small chimes heard through the fatal gloom ;

Whether, in spite of sinning,
Cloud and noon-darkness and too soon despair,
The end be perfect as was the beginning,
The evening also as the dawn was fair ;

Or whether, all misgiving
Fulfilled, and the last hour left desolate,
The weary flight of time, the pain of living,
Brought to a cold and stark and sightless fate,

Though there be no to-morrow,
To-day is ours, not to give back again,
Not to lapse from that bourne of joy or sorrow,
Where, like a tide at flood, life must remain.

Sabbath

Pleasant at sunrise, and no sign of toil.
This ploughshare just a mirror of the light.
This moist furrow was made to yield the bird
His breakfast, and the ploughman stays at home.
What hour is striking? Ah, the chimes go on.
A call to prayer—God of the Sabbath, stay
The hour of destiny. Make Thou for us
A little longer sabbath here.

Sails

Thought's island traffickers
Upon our being's unapparent sea,
Sails, moving on the mists of death,
And not a ship that walks beneath,
But only Sails are we.

Our island treasures,
They are a fable of a miraged clime.
A freight plunged fathomless
In deep sea wilderness,
Hoard of undialled time.

Happen at some dark hour,
The floating bottom of our dreams shall rise.
Where those tall rigs of doom
Still haunt the rolling gloom,
And sails for merchandise.

Sea Voices

I am called from sleep by the call of the stranger sea,
But the voice of the deep that was calling called not me,
I listen all day, but the wave speaks with its friend,
The wave on the way with the wave at the journey's end.

O who shall hear when a voice so simple sounds
As the waters near, as the waters past their bounds ;
Who listening ever shall gather what is said
By the lips that never were living, and are not dead ?

The voice, the sorrow, is theirs, and of yesterday,
And of that to-morrow when they and only they
Are the voice that is breaking the desolate silence, the moan
Of the waves that are waking from sleep that is only their
own.

The past of the world and its future are not man's ;
His tents are furled like a desert caravan's ;
His tents are gone, and the footprints that were his
A furrow drawn on an ocean wide as this.

The beacons fail on that land's icy shore
Whence one set sail, and after him no more.
The hour is past ; and whence the hearth-flame fled,
Still sits the last of lonely watchers, dead.

Witch Come Riding

Face of darkness
Long in hiding,
From the star-pits
Cloudlike gliding,
'Tis the midnight
Witch come riding.
And betoken,
Broom-bestridding,
Birchen bristle
Stark behind her.
And her mad hair,
As a distant
Rainstorm dusteth
Plain terrestrial,
So she rideth.
And she trundleth
Hoop for spindle,
Spider-haggard
Droppeth spindle,
Long thread droppeth,
Short thread stoppeth,
And the star-threads
Fly the spindle.
In sky-rafters
She is spinning
Monstrous cobwebs,
All night spinning
Hemispherical
Earth-investing
Snood of silken
Net for ginning
Sins of nature,
Fears of mortals ;

What with small wings
And burst bodies
What with creeps
And what with crawlers
On sky-ceiling,
Floats and fliers
In sky-darkness,
Terrors fifty
Times as many
As in daylight
There were any ;
Soon she catcheth
Millions, millions ;
Old ship-spider
In his stuffy
Cobweb-cabin
Stoweth never
Such a cargo
As she stoweth.
And for certain,
Not a weltering
Insect ever
Maketh mischief
Of escaping
Prison bung-tight
As a barrel.
So she has them,
Careful spider,
In her threadbare
Cells of silken
Store prodigious,
Nightly hanging
Glutton larder,
Noisome banquet,
Eat who will but

Not that spidei .
Daybreak—presto—
See—she starteth.
And she turneth
Into something
Full fantastic.
'Tis the beldam
With the besom,
And the mad hair.
Now she mounteth
Her fast spindle,
Wheel of moment,
Like a whirling
Skirt-ballooning,
Half-shank-naked
Antic housewife,
Broom belabouring
The swart rafters
Madly sweeping
Loaded cobwebs,
Wing-dust, leg-bits,
And burst bodies,
Sight unfit for
Christian morning,
All the litter
Out of nature.
And go look you,
This broom-riding
Spindle-trundling
Spidery witch is
Not a spider
Not a witch but
Heaven's charwoman,
Basement-cleaner
Of the morning.

**But when Chaos
Kicked the Dust-bin,
She was nurse to
Saturn's children.**

Sienna, 1912

O, the sunlight of that azure morning.
O, you Ruby, sweet Italian wine;
—Was it there, in Umbrian hues translated,
I loved you, love of mine ?

Scents forgotten—Out of windows,
Balconied, above the tannic pools,
Golden workshops of Sienna,
Hidden workmen, casting down your tools.

Holiday of Gods!—They stopped us, smiling,
Those people, in the steep-up, sunburnt streets.
Outside the city gates, among the olives,
They said,—To their safe seats

The gods, the old gods, even the Creators,
Had home returned across the heavenly sea.
The ruthless gods, the unwilling gods, taskmasters,
Our love had set them and their servants free.

Waves

A lonely shoreman scans a sailless sea.
Never return the dead never return.
On the dull sands the waves break heavily.
Never return the dead never return.
Hiss to his feet the swarming snakes of foam.
Never return the dead never return.
He stands. His eyes are dry. His lips are dumb.
Never return the dead never return.
March on, march on,—the drum, the drum.
Never return the dead never return.

Ere Dawn powders the Peak

Ere dawn powders the peak, a matin bell
Speaks in the vale. A small voice chiming once.
A million leaves drop dew, as one drop fell.
Birds chirrup silence, to be held again,
While the bell tinkles twice.
Yet no foot falls, nor cowed monk goes by
With book and priestly office in his hands,
Nor clerk, nor sexton, but the ghostly wait
Of unseen congregations, shadowy bands
Suddenly by the way, one thinks.
How laden seems the air, and as the balm
Of emptied censers swinks the air—all aureate
The sudden sward of flowered river-brinks
With silver cups and daisies. There is light
To read by, but no book, no clerk, nor priest.
Secular day is starting on the farm.

A delicate sweet Music

A delicate sweet music
Breathes from a hidden sea,
A little gulf, and that immensity.
It is the nerve of creation,
Almost this you and me.
In the beginning He created. He is, and we may be.

You heliotrope, you sunward still inclining,
My bashful evening daisy with closed eye,
On mossy path whereby
The eastern border flanks the lawn
Of the hedgehog's pilgrimage.
And scattered martins crowd together home again,
And cry like gulls about the fishy sands.

A Cloud on the Horizon

A cloud on the horizon, shot with blood,
But disappearing even with the stream
Of this world's sun. Other illumants gleam
Though cold across the waste. These—if they could
But show the path. Only they seem to brood
On waters hidden, or marsh and flick the beam
This way or that, and punctuate the solitude.
—That one should travel thus companionless,
Who loved the friendly inn, the welcome home,
Eschewed the lust to roam.
But are there friends if one should turn aside,
Where that red curtain shows? Ah, loneliness,
Open and take me in, and hide, and hide
My shame away, that I have come so far
From where was home. Here I may find
Spirits that travel faster than life.
Those whom I seemed to lose
As fallen by the way,
Are here before me and have made it home.
And never said fare-well.
Only, well-come.

The Hours tread Heavily

The hours tread heavily upon the ear.
The vast night holds the jackals' cry.
Some monstrous carcase spills its shroud.
The insects shriek, the drums are cowed,
And mutter silence. You shall hear
The muted continent re-form
Its brazen ranks, stand sleeping to the cold
Foothills of that Nirvana, and the banks
Of Brahma's incense-cloud, that stirs in sleep
Of nameless centuries, and slakes the grave
With paradisal odours to the foam
Of waves that never break but stretch as scrolls
Graven upon eternity. Their crests
A tapering flame, their writing destiny,
In blackness charactered to fructify
The shard, and melt the masses of the hills,
Piling the coasts of earth with watery surge.
—So the slain splendour of the sunset spills
On Aden's bottom crag and claws the sea
With dragon feet.
—Now in the volume of Creation's mind
Bends Atlas to his toil again.

For Evening and Inexorable Night

For evening and inexorable night
Its lampless circuit starts and footless trail.
But where is Sleep ? Not in that lidless eye.
Who watches there ? What hand has grasped his staff ?
The sheepfolds tremble, yet there is no sound,
As lightning leaps through banqueting, they steep
Their souls in slumber. Only that eye.
—Wake, whirlwinds, wake ! It was a leaf that fell.
Now we will count eternity. There's time
Ere morning. Nay, but kick the ashes, here
Is fire. Only a very little flame.
Only a very little world. 'Tis past
With all the world. But this much life is left.
We are not alone. Even so was God
Not lonely in creation day. For this is life,
Only to be ; and this is God, to live
And not to die. God said there is no death.
And I, when I am nothing, I am all.
Come, let us make an endless sacrifice.
Come, let us worship here.

Roseate, entranced

Roseate, entranced,
What stillness! When it was day
Into this shape they danced.
Now they are palled emblems in their night
Of what was then their day.
But is it night, when they
Are petal-open, where wings fly
Like gossamers, engendering spring
At this strange hour
Which the small chimes call night?
—But is it night
Or is the sun turned silver? Ah, I know.
'Twas like the shape of wings that covered us.
Nor sight, nor sound, nor sense, but more than these.
Things heavenly they cannot keep in heaven,
For heavenly wisdom is to stoop as low
As those who need, and bring
To all creatures, even so to us,
Their gospelling.

Is Coming Dawn?

I seek—Is Coming Dawn?

—Is it to hope?

All those Moon-Rakers in the sky.

And harvesters thereby.

Stooks, waving fronds like barley sheaves and rye,

And the sun's ammunition wagons coming up

With secret padding feet on dewy lawns

Wayside, by-the-bye.

A short red curtain drawn, a peeping eye, unseen but
seeing far,

Like that Inquisitive half-veiled in mist.

That swift star.

And lips were kissed not dry

From sips of other wine than ran in Hecate's veins

When night fell and all chivalry thrown back on ravaged plains

As tempest lulled,

And certain marble faces,

Black-lettered brass,

In cold cathedral aisles.

All dank and mould.

And Heart stands still at whiles.

The lettering hard to see.

As Beauty's traces

In Mourners' trains.

The brass is dulled.

The mail is rust.

Dust is to dust.

Man will not but he must.

The best is not to be.

—But is the story told?

But is there left to tell?

The ink dries in the well.
A child dipped deep the plume.
A child's script. Shall the inky crystal tell
Of earlier doom ?
—Or Coming Day ? Do they
Who gild the script, magically illumine,
Sooth say ?
And as a lanterned tomb ?
—But the affrighted Augurs went away.
And well they wist. Others must say.
But who are they ?
Who are they list ?
—Is Coming Day ?

The Sky Whitens for Dawn

The sky whitens for dawn
Behind the iron cloud. "
And the sea-surge pursues unmeaning speech.
So too the shapes of the near cliff
Draw closer to their skulls and bones
A blackened shroud.
—And hark—
This Cornish earth, this long Atlantic reach,
In shivering rags this native sky,
Confuse in one sharp sea-bird's cry
Their colourless immensity.

Words without Music

The early bird wakes on the moonlight, breaks
The quiet of the night.
And why that magic cry—that tune
Was the dark thrush's own, in the dark yew.

I looked for dawn, but you,
Black bird, first peered into the livid sky,
And blue surroundings of the moon,
—The colour of your tune.

Dark Sunset

This empty mind, unfurnished thought,
Sad end of day,
I would I were that wild bird, under that cloud,
Over that sea, way and away,

To meet another sunrise, where
Clamorous and loud,
The eastern winds assemble, and tear up
This earthly shroud.

What Thoughts that Memory Yields

What thoughts that memory yields,
Of squandered fields of youth, and shepherdless the fields.
—Only sometime is seen
A powerful shepherd-wind, striding round the Horn, all
 smocked with cloud,
Pursuing roads of green and following
The grey dogs of the sea, and flocks of foam,
To southern folds and home
Of waters tenantless but for those clouds
And what lies under many shrouds, and pent in walls of ice,
Scars, bones leviathan, of creatures old as time,
And sometimes robed in weed and arras sprent
And broidered like the frosted panes
Of giant dome, spanning the pavement
In ocean fanes, lit by the elder stars.

Hunter Home

The dark guide disappears in the intense,
As fog-bind sinks in watery sands.
—Silence, as in unpeopled lands.

A voice calls—hence.
—But whither? Whilst one waits,
A ghostly horn sounds on the aching trail
A night-bird her unearthly cry,
As a soul passes by.
Another leaves a heel-mark in flat sands
Fleet as the deer in jeopardy,
To mock the jackal and confuse the fates.

—That old silence again.
A ghostly horn sounds on the aching trail
Of many calloused feet.
The wind sobs in the vale.

Voices Melodious as the Sunset

Voices melodious as the sunset
On russet brook or clear. Strains heard in a dream.
Eve asleep in Eden, near the stream
Where first she saw herself reflect and dared not Adam look,
And hid herself in vine and fig till Adam took.
—All this one heard, and saw this, when that sleep
Invaded, or forsook
The path of pain, and not to live again,
Unless to live and then, even in pain,
Yet not in vain.

One Time when slowly turned the Years

One time when slowly turned the years,
A strange bird sang, and all the valley hushed to hear.
And all night long, through dusky pale,
Sang on the same.
—Hushed, too, the nightingale.

Then, as wind-waken drum,
Or minute-bell, so plain,
Echoless, as from unfathomed well,
Hollow voices come,
And are not heard again.

Out of Horizons of the Past

Out of horizons of the past there dawned a greater day.
And there was light, but not, not eyes to see.
Nor haze for mote to dance in, nor moon-ray
Left over of the night, as sentinel
Stands unrelieved at dawn, sometimes.

And had Death shuttered all the homes of sense,
Sight, hearing, taste, and dreams. A child's dreams, even.
—Blind too,
All that eternity.

Call for the Cheer of Night

Call for the Cheer of Night,
The Goblet Lamp and Ember Clay.

Light up, and stroke the Kitten on the Hearth.
And blow a Cloud to Clouds of Far-away.

(They had that Thought of us.
Who thought we lived to die.)

Now, none of us, buried nor shriven,
Nor no clue left to seek us by.

And they who had that thought of us
Under that other star,
The planetudes have called to regions nebulous.
—We, only, Are.

Angelus

That breath of soft-blown flame
New-found on happy hearthstones in old shires.
The silver quires
Of dusk are not yet silent, and the Name
Is said, to quiet children to their rest.
Another has not left the breast.

Heavily fall his land-boots on the step.
—The Master's.—His voice tells
Sleep wisdom to the dawn,
And mutters grace to silence.

One plays
An idle instrument. Plays not, but touches soft,
To put away again.
It is an infant's yawn.
The giant Earth-mother, it is her breath
Come with the Angelus on windward bells,
Muted as to the eternal questioning.
—The Eternal, sighing in his sleeplessness,
And as he held his hand
One moment from its task.
—The God that needed Sabbath, when his plan
Resolved itself in man.
—And has not rested since.

Lady from the Western Isles

Lady from the western isles,
Comes shimmering through the fields at earliest morn.
Her train is borne, it seems,
By elf, or leprechaun
Is she —— she is the daughter of young dreams
By autumn pregnant, near perennial streams.
Or that young shepherdess,
Fresh from the happy silences of sleep,
Sees not the furrows in the farmer's field,
Nor her own face glassed in the loitering rill.
She sees white flocks, may be,
Go million-footed up the shepherds' hill.
So seems a cloud moveless in quiet skies.
And are the years told in eternities.
So she dreams still.

Green is the Land

Green is the land and level as the sea.
No mountain nor shadow of any tree.
No footprint where no living thing may be.

The blue, blue sky, a scatheless dome of light,
Has that strange colour of a summer night.
Remembered more than seen in ageing sight.

Yet is no star in heaven nor flower beneath,
But that might fall from faded coffin-wreath,
Or dateless yew, the veiled late mourner seeth.

Surely 'tis like a pool all silentness,
Half-hidden in a cavern's deep recess,
Green-mantled in a voiceless wilderness.

Hither on accidental feet like wings,
One fled from Pan—his joy to madness stings.
And dying she gave birth to deathless things.

On Losing MSS

Could I but find a leaf from that lost book,
The rest might flutter to my hand, for love of you.
As to our snow-lit bed
The starlings of a winter morn,
The robin to be fed.

As the wings start at even, too—the shrill,
The sea-borne swift, and others nameless of the sea.
The gull on tempest tost,
The Western chough,
—All I remember, dreaming by that sea.

And were that not enough,
The open grave. There stands, though but in memory there
—No tombstone tall
Shall lean to me.
I list to these, the same birds call.
But memory itself a ghost.
—And if I harp on things that never were.

Hour before Dawn

Hour before dawn, most silent of the night.
Then do heavy eyelids strain at sleep.
—Strain, and the Deep is conscious of the Deep.
And as the dark earth almost fears the light.
Weary, and wearier still, as in despite
Of hope, the senses back into the senses creep.
Back to the keep of dreams. So does the eremite
His vigil keep, and shuns the pagan day.

Sunrise in London

When the sun rises as he rose this morning
In a violet sky,
At the end of the dark street, with his changing face adorning
Those blackened roofs, we stared into his eye.

Red pendulum of light, to his own moment beating
Our moments, as we watch him in eclipse—that darkened
tower.

Mighty clock of time, defeating
Our earthly hopes, and yet repeating
Our heart-beats, hour by hour.

Your Early Beauty

Your early beauty
Shadows of time do not dull.
Nor tears stain,
Nor the lovelight fail,
Which was that beauty.

Lovelier than love you are.
—Is the cup full?
Or, drained, to fill again?
Did we not pledge each other in the Wood?
Does Time annul
His date with us in that Eternity?

You will be never other than you are.
It seemed so then. So as to say,
—The way lies here—there is no other way.

—The forest massed in darkness, and no star
I stood, a felon, in a shadeless wood.

This Sad Serenity

This sad serenity of February evening
Suddenly flashes, as a dream from dreaming.
Earth smiles after punishment.
As lovers tease, to prove the often proven,
—Snatch lips away.

Bright brows are knit of questing clouds
In mute confabulation.
The sun goes down
As a day labourer to his rest,
Plucking the bright fruit of blanchéd orchards.
It rains impalpably from English azure,
As though it were the sun himself were weeping.

Tremble the Feet

Tremble the feet, and tremble, tremble the airs.
Who is a-foot this morning, over the hills?
Forests of birds are singing, forests away,
Farther than singing priests in a fold of the hills,
And the ruins monastic whose autumn is hid from the world.

O trouble me not with question profane, nor question at all.
If they who conduct us are silent, what boots it to ask?
To the singer his harp, to the poet his guerdon of fame.
Our garments are old, and our feet are worn through to the
stones.

The doors are silent that rang to the song and the dance.
And ever and ever the red curtains drawn.
The vats are empty and the ullage dried on the floor,
The faces we see in the window are only our own in the glass
And strangers we seem to ourselves, and strangers we pass.

To your knees my companions and last of the terrible world,
That the terror of darkness be not as the terror of light.

In Ithaca

In Ithaca, at shut of day,
An Attic warbler lost his way.
So sang he still, if guide might come
Charmed by his song, to lead him home.
—None came, but he trilled on the same
Till Dawn on Ida broke in flame.

They called him Philomel, who loved his song,
In Ithaca, her lovely vale.
But to these English, in their Shakespeare's tongue,
He is their poet's nightingale.

Death at Dawn

Over the Sussex wealden come
Fanfares fast of Channel gales,
And lash at dawn on wattled pales,
And on the doors of Downland drum,
And on the electric stanchions strum
Æolian harmonies and scales.
A wizard tells his elfin tales,
Breathing as in delirium.

Still in his chimney-corner sits
The Ancient, as he sat at eve
And saw his last familiar leave.
Reason has wandered from his wits.
And now the trumpeters of morning shout
And the earth gladdens at a soul's reprieve.

In What Strange Land

What wings are these
That gather in the late noon light ?
Who hears ? Who lists to hear ?
And silence holds the silver trees
As in moon-blossom'd night,
So motionless they stand,
And hushed the babble brook and pool inurned,
And waxen flowers festooned.
In what strange land are we ?
—And loveliness that is, and is
The burthen of what hour ?
What sign is there to us
Of what these things may be ?
And how the breath of life
Is waft from star to star,
And as the shadows of eternity.
And is the secret sought from flower to flower,
And cometh none to undo the spell,
And cometh none to tell
In what strange land we are,
And what are we.

